

How to Pick up Discarded Syringes

The Problem:

- Injection drug users can litter syringes on public property. Syringes can also clog manholes and pipes in sewage treatment plants.
- Used syringes can contain blood which can be infectious.
- Clean-up workers can be exposed to HIV, Hepatitis-C or Hepatitis-B if they are stuck by a used syringe. Clean-up workers should avoid all skin contact with syringes.

How to Clean-up Syringes

- **Bring gloves, pliers and a sharps container to the location of litter.**
- Put on puncture resistant gloves. Put leather gloves over healthcare gloves if you are reaching into pipes or manholes.
- Do not touch the syringe with your hands.
- Use pliers to pick up the syringe.
- Put the syringe immediately into a Sharps Disposal Container. Place the syringe needle-first into the container.
- Do not walk across the park to get to the sharps container, bring the container with you. Do not hand the syringe to another person.
- Do not recap the needle. If a syringe was already capped, keep the cap on, still use pliers, and still discard in a Sharps Disposal Container.
- Spray pliers with dilute bleach solution to disinfect. Wipe with a paper towel or air dry. The paper towel can go into regular trash.
- Remove your gloves, and discard in plastic trash bag.
- Wash hands, or use alcohol gel to clean your hands as soon as possible.
- Keep the sharps disposal container in a secure location. This must be disposed as biohazard waste.



Who Can Do This Clean-up

- Worker must be trained initially and annually in Bloodborne Pathogens.
- Worker must be trained in use and hazards of chemical disinfectant.
- Worker must be offered the Hepatitis-B vaccine before they are assigned to syringe clean-up.
- Worker must be provided with gloves, pliers, disinfectant, sharps disposal containers, alcohol gel hand disinfectant, and access to a sink.
- Worker must know where to seek immediate medical follow-up if they get a needlestick.
- If a worker gets a cut or needlestick from a used syringe, seek medical attention at your local hospital **as soon as possible**. The clinic will evaluate the risk for transmission of HIV and Hepatitis, and may recommend medication. The medication is most effective within the first 24 hours.

